

Fermilab Employee Advisory Group Meeting

July 26, 2012

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM, Comitium

AGENDA TOPICS

- Management updates
- Key EAG Topics for 2012-2013

MEETING SUMMARY

1) Management Update

Pier Oddone introduced Jack Anderson, the new Fermilab COO who has replaced Bruce Chrisman. Jack comes to Fermilab with a lot of experience both at single program and multi-program labs having worked at Princeton and Oak Ridge. Fermilab is fortunate to have attracted him to the lab. Jack noted his excitement and enthusiasm for Fermilab. He has a background in industrial engineering and economics and interest in how to bring technology to practical use. He also has a background in nuclear submarines and nuclear energy. Looking forward to helping make a positive future for Fermilab. He had a chance to meet with the EAG steering committee last week and looks forward to further interaction with the EAG.

The Higgs Boson discovery has been the big news over the past month, and it is helping to point interest back to Fermilab as well. Last week Pier gave a talk for Senate staff on the discovery of the Higgs and the room was full so that points to some interest there. The lab is working diligently to coordinate with DOE on the collaboration with India, and hoping that India will be a significant partner in LBNE and Project X.

The Nation is approaching a big moment on January 1 2013 when a lot of major automatic actions will take place on the budget. So far it appears that little effort is being made to prepare for these events. Yesterday, the Senate and House passed bills to get details from the Administration on how they would implement sequestration within 30 days, (sequestration imposes a forced 10% across the board cut if Congress does agree to a deficit-reducing budget). Right now it is impossible to predict what will happen.

Things at the lab are going well. The NoVA first module should get installed in August, as all the technical issues have been addressed. It is very important to deliver on NoVA as there are a lot of future actions that will require our attention. MicroBoone is also going well. The ILC was completely defunded, including superconducting RF which is important to future projects at Fermilab. In response, DOE has a new proposal out to prepare a test accelerator for this technology. It is important that Fermilab win that proposal and get this project to finish the work. Project X continues to get support.

EAG question: What is the status of the involuntary RIF? It is taking longer than we had hoped, and we are analyzing the situation. We have had some folks leave the lab over this period which reduces the numbers for the RIF, and we are still working to determine a final number which then requires approval by DOE. It will likely be in place before October. It really is not a good way to do this, but it is where we are at the moment.

EAG question: Can you help explain the sudden overhead rate increase? We have rather large fixed costs at the lab to support the existing infrastructure, and they don't shrink with the budget, so the percentage of overhead automatically goes up with each budget cut. In addition, we have increased severance pay as folks leave the lab. Thus fewer employees results in a higher overhead rate per employee to support the same level of infrastructure. We agree that these recalculations should not happen so late in the fiscal year, but when budgets and projects change throughout the year it gets difficult to plan ahead. We are looking at the issue and recognize we want to find ways to predict and manage this issue better.

EAG question: Can you help explain the zero defect issue? We have long had a zero injury rate goal, and now we are trying to look at processes to help ensure that we take the same approach in everything we do as part of quality, performance, safety and all our systems to ensure that we are trying to prevent mistakes. We do realize that we have a lot of programs and slogans out there, and we are looking to have a unifying program. Jack Anderson noted an idea around productive inquiry has been very effective in other labs. By asking the right questions to get at the information needed for important issues and changes, it helps to create more openness and get more eyes on issues.

EAG question: There are rumors of a third year pay freeze, is there any truth to that? Pier has heard nothing about a third year freeze, and would fight it if it came up. The whole idea of the M&O contract was to pay to market to get good candidates. However, even without another pay freeze, we will not be getting a larger budget to support higher salaries, so higher salaries will have to be balanced by smaller staff again. This October 1 will be our second year without increases, so October 2013 will be when we see our first increase after the freeze.

EAG question: how many staff have gotten increases from promotions or other means during the freeze? It is a small number, we will get the actual numbers and provide that information to the EAG.

EAG question: We are losing technical experts, we cant just get that same quality person back, they need experience to come up to speed, and there is a lot of concern that this is not being addressed? Pier agreed that this is definitely an issue, we realize expertise is being lost, and this is why some staff are not allowed to take a voluntary separation. We are looking to cross-train, but in some areas we are simply doing less work so we constantly have to balance staff to ensure that we are retaining and training people to do the work we have now. We recognize people are being pulled in lots of

directions and we are trying to make sure that in this matrix environment we are not spreading people too thin.

Deb Sebastian, from the Office of Communication, discussed her new role to support internal communication. She has met with a lot of people in her first 6 weeks. She has also looked at all the past EAG summaries and incorporated many of the recommendations of this group into a draft internal communication plan. She will distribute the plan for review to the CAG members and would appreciate feedback.

Brian de Graff provided a summary of the mid-month meeting of the EAG. The main topic was how to deal with and communicate the “new normal” situation at the lab. The EAG recognizes the need to find some sense of stability at some point, with things in such flux it is difficult for many people and morale continues to be a big issue.

2) Key EAG Topics for 2012-2013

Based on ongoing issues of the EAG and input from senior management, four major topics were identified as possible focus of research, discussion, and action for the EAG in the coming year. These four topics include:

1. **Improving Morale** at the lab, how do we get back that unit cohesion that is no longer at the lab? **Old culture vs. current reality**, how to communicate this and talk about how we are going to move forward and deal with the new normal, the negative things that are happening at the lab from outside forces?
2. Improving **management quality and management culture**.
3. How to **communicate** what we do more effectively to non-technical people at the lab, and what it means.
4. **Work/life balance**, flexible work schedule, review existing procedures and approaches and look for opportunities moving forward.

Small groups were established to discuss each of the four topics, and report back to the full EAG on the following findings:

1. Frame the challenge or problem statement
2. What is the most useful and legitimate role for the EAG?
3. What sorts of products would we produce?
4. What sort of activities would be most effective to produce those products?
5. How should we organize to do this work (need for subgroups)?
6. Do we need to conduct any outreach and/or research?
7. Do we need any outside help?
8. Proposed timeline of activities.

Topic 1. Improving Morale

General Points:

- All business cultures have changed significantly over the last 20 years
- What IS our culture? What WAS it to begin with? Understanding of culture seems to vary by group and person.
- Sense of culture also varies between newer employees vs. long-term employees.

1. Frame the challenge or problem.

- Workforce does not seem to have the feeling of unity or family it once had.
- Economic climate and its effects leave people nervous for their future here.
- Staff reduction: “just get it over with!”

2. Identify the most useful and legitimate role for the EAG that will best benefit all employees at the lab.

- Communication
- Foster dialogue, dispel rumors, act as liaisons
- Increase transparency with management, ease feeling of secrecy
- Try to address concept of “caste system” and division of workforce

3. Identify the sorts of outcomes and/or products we would anticipate producing.

Identify the intended audience for each.

- A better workplace environment & atmosphere
- Unity & cohesion of the workforce
- Workforce comfort, confidence in Fermilab
- Increased levels of safety and production
- Increased attendance
- Understanding of the “New Culture”

4. Identify the activities that would be needed to produce those products.

- Flowchart of EAG topic progress
- Dialogue
- HPI as culture / philosophy, not solely as incident investigation
- Staff reduction: “get it over with!”

5. How should we organize to produce this work (need for subgroups)?

- Not yet discussed

6. Do we need to conduct any outreach and/or research?

- Compare / investigate companies & labs renowned for their morale, what are their methods?

7. Do we need any outside help?

- Not yet discussed

8. Proposed timeline of activities.

- Not yet discussed

Morale issues heard in common every-day experience, in no particular order:

- When is the next cut? Get it over with please!
- The reason the Lab's looking for volunteers is the exact reason we cannot volunteer, even though we want to, IE, years of a bad economy.
- Is the Lab subscribing to the business ethic of always pushing a few people out, to ensure keeping those who stay on their toes, and bringing in new blood cheaper?
- Am I safe to put down roots, buy a car / house / marriage?
- Loss of technical expertise is really starting to hurt, especially for limited knowledgeable experts, both techs and engineers. Those left are "fractured" into too many directions.
- When are the raises returning? And will they make up for ground lost over the years not enacted, or simply return at going yearly percentages?
- Caste system – techs feel quite inferior in the order, and mechanical lower than electrical, operators, and anything physics or directorate. Many non-technical support people feel even lower than that.
- Employees new to the area as part of hiring on at the Lab may feel at home here, but alienated in the greater Chicago area.
- Old Culture vs New Culture, and what even was the culture?
- Uh-oh, I did it now! I'll be on "the list" for sure!

Topic 2. Improving Management Quality and Management Culture

1. Frame the challenge or problem.
 - What to do with results of the management survey
 - How management receives and deals with complaints
 - Lack of clear metrics for management performance
 - Lack of consistent standards for management performance
 - Issues of respect
 - Lack of performance feedback
 - Poor communication
 - Lack of positive reinforcement
 - Sole focus on getting science done, without thinking of workforce
2. Identify the most useful and legitimate role for the EAG that will best benefit all employees at the lab.
 - Propose guidelines and standards
 - Develop ideas for “tools” to deal with subpar managers
3. Identify the sorts of outcomes and/or products we would anticipate producing. Identify the intended audience for each.
 - Focus on management culture in as important manner as safety culture
 - Consistent manager standards that everyone knows
 - Comfortable and accessible reporting and management followthrough
 - System for eliminating retribution
4. Identify the activities that would be needed to produce those products.
 - Series of roundtables this fall. Get as many employees involved as possible with an expectation of a product by early 2013.
5. How should we organize to produce this work (need for subgroups)?
 - Subgroup of the EAG
6. Do we need to conduct any outreach and/or research?
 - Outreach done through the previous survey
 - What are best practices at high performing industries like Apple, Google?
 - What are best practices at other labs?
7. Do we need any outside help?
 - Need strong support from upper management and the ability to stand firm against manager pushback
8. Proposed timeline of activities.
 - Roundtables in October, proposal by early 2013

Topic 3. Improving Communication

1. Frame the challenge or problem
 - Internal Communication
 - Flowdown vs. broadcast
 - Different groups need different methods (email vs. bulletin board vs group meetings)
2. Identify the most useful and legitimate role for the EAG that will best benefit all employees at the lab
 - Propose solutions
 - Survey methods
 - Change culture
3. Identify the sorts of outcomes and/or products would we anticipate producing. Identify the intended audience for each.
 - State a standard
4. Identify the activities that would be needed to produce those products
 - Director should state this is the way to laterally communicate
 - Then people can be responsible for themselves and know how they are expected to stay up to date
5. How should we organize to do this work (need for subgroups)?
 - a. No need for subgroups. The EAG itself is sub-group enough and we will need the whole group for input.
6. Do we need to conduct any outreach and/or research?

No, Deb Sebastian has done all the research
7. Do we need any outside help?

No, Deb Sebastian comes from the outside
8. Proposed timeline of activities.
 - See Communications (Deb) timeline & action plan
 - Need to establish how each dept/group/project will communicate with it's people
 - Add ID photos to Fermi phone directory (Optional) – should only be viewable from on-site.
 - People need a way to ask questions

Topic 4. Work/life balance

First task is to define what we mean by a “flexible work schedule”. This can mean different things to different people; for example, flex time can mean a 4day-10hr vs. 5day-8hr work week, telecommuting, flexible work start/end times, etc. It was pointed out that such flexibility can be especially important if someone has a sick child or elderly parents and needs to leave work early or come in late. Such flexibility tends to be an agreement between the employee and supervisor and an area where there is not a common policy around the lab. Of course, being able to have a flexible work schedule does not always work for all job classes (e.g., the grounds crew cannot telecommute).

Problem statement: The problem appears to be the lack of communication and apparent inconsistency in the lab-wide application of flex time. It is not clear if the lab has an official policy on flex time. If a policy exists, it appears to have not been widely communicated. What flex time options are available to employees and who decides whether it is available to a given employee – is this ultimately up to HR, supervisors, or divisions heads? There is an impression that there is a lot of inconsistency, i.e., that certain groups at Fermilab are getting “special treatment” and that “some people have been working flex time for years”. This perceived inequity effects morale. The same is also true for outside Fermilab: “there are flex time programs at other labs and at the DOE, so why can’t we have the same here?” This topic has ties to communication, morale, and management.

Role of the EAG and intended output: the EAG could first help assess the desire for a flexible work schedule among employees at the lab. Who would be looking for this type of benefit? We propose asking each EAG member to take an initial informal poll of their colleagues. Before we recommend a more detailed investigation of flex time, we should first make sure that this is something that it is desired. An EAG sub-group on work/life balance can also conduct research on this subject to help further educate ourselves (along the lines of the article that Carol recently distributed), to be posted on sharepoint. What has worked and what hasn’t at other labs and in the private sector? We can also solicit further information from HR. Is there a defined policy on flex time at the lab? There appears to be a need to communicate a more clearly defined policy.

Organization: We suggest forming a sub-committee of the EAG to focus on the specific issue of flex time. We could start with the current membership of this sub-group and invite other interested EAG members to join us.

Outside help: Yes ,we need outside help. As one suggestion, we could ask someone from a nearby lab (for example, Argonne) to come speak to the group on what worked and didn’t work with the application of a flexible work schedule at their lab. It was mentioned that Fermilab did commission a committee that examined this flex time issue at one point. It would be helpful to have access to their report, if one exists, so we build on past experience and do not duplicate effort. We would also like to reach out to Fermilab management to hear some of the issues involved and what some of the challenges might be in implementing such a program here. Are there any other options?

Timeline: We would like to start on this research and information gathering soon as this is something that could help improve morale at the lab.

REMAINING 2012 MEETING DATES

Meetings are currently scheduled for the following Thursdays

All meetings 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

- August 23 - Comitium
- September 27 - Comitium
- October 25 - Comitium
- November 15 - Comitium
- December 20 - Comitium